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OUR COMMON WELFARE

Fostering Unity and Carrying the A.A. Message in Area 29 Maryland General Service

Service conference draws hundreds to Hershey, Pa.

More than 1,300 members of Alcoholics Anonymous gathered at Hershey Lodge in Hershey, Pa., Feb 22-25 for the 33rd annual North East Regional A.A. Service Assembly (NERAASA).

It was the largest in-person NERAASA in the history of the event, said Steve O., one of the organizers from Area 59 (Eastern Pennsylvania).

Called “Connecting with Love, Unity, and Service,” the conference was a busy three-plus days of panels, roundtables, A.A. meetings, meals, fellowship, and chocolate. Plenty of chocolate.

Panel topics focused on issues to be discussed at the 74th General Service Conference April 14-20, including how to treat the Founders’ writings, participation of online groups in the A.A. Service structure, GSO finances, and safety in A.A.

A healthy cohort of Area 29 trusted servants – more than a dozen – was part of the mix. During a spirited flag ceremony in the Great American Hall, representatives from each of the 18 Areas in the North East region raced up the aisle with a small state flag to wild cheers from the crowd. Panel 74 Delegate Terry P. gave a flawless performance for Area 29.

Area 59, which hosted the event, had two representatives dash to the front, one riding piggy-back, waving a stick. The banner had flown away in all the excitement. A third Pennsylvania representative quickly followed, waving the stick-less banner.

Complimentary baskets of miniature Hershey’s, Krackel, and Mr. Goodbar graced every meeting room, where roundtables occurred, starting at the pretty-late-for-some hour of 8:45 p.m. Young People’s roundtables began even later – 10:15 p.m.



At roundtables, participants exchanged ideas about what’s working in A.A. Area service and what’s not. Panels were more formal, with three 10-minute speakers, followed by questions from the audience. “No applause or groans, please,” was each moderator’s common refrain.

“There’s a sense of a Higher Power in these rooms of service that I don’t feel anywhere else,” said Bethany Y., Area 29 Grapevine Committee chair, who reported on NERAASA at the March 16 Assembly. “Getting together and talking about some really controversial topics that can be upsetting to a lot of people, but there’s no fighting, there’s no brawls...”

Because of costs and difficulty finding venues, NERAASA 2025 will be a virtual event, hosted by Area 45 (South Jersey). **For more on NERAASA, see pp. 8-9.**



Don't like 'people'? Get involved; speak up

Terry P., Area 29 Delegate, Panel 74

Who decided to change the Preamble? That was a question I heard a number of times following the 2021 decision by the General Service Conference to change “men and women” to “people” in the Preamble.

It seemed as though members of groups in my district had not heard anything about a potential change. Some, in fact, had very little idea of how the conference worked or even what the Conference was. I felt almost helpless to bring so many members up to speed on the way that Alcoholics Anonymous effected changes to our literature and policies.

During my time in recovery, I have had the fortune to live in several different areas in the U.S., and I don't think it's unique anywhere that many A.A. members stick to their home group and enjoy the meetings they have and the service they are able to give to this program that has saved our lives. My sponsor, who I had been with for almost a decade at the time, said he was not sure what a District Committee Member was, but he was glad I was making myself available for service.

Truthfully, when I talk to my sponsees about service, I explain that there are numerous opportunities to get involved in service in A.A., and not all service positions appeal to everyone. Find the type of service you like and do that. But, the members of a home group have a right to know what's going on in A.A., especially when decisions made can affect the very meetings we attend. That's where the Group's Service Representative comes in.

“Find the type of service you like and do that. But, the members of a home group have a right to know what's going on in A.A., especially when decisions made can affect the very meetings we attend.”

Again, not a service position for everyone, but often the only link that a group and its members have with the larger picture of what is going on in A.A. – whether at the local district level, such as the county you live in, the whole Area, at the state level, or A.A. within the U.S. and Canada.

And there are many things going on, often opportunities to enhance one's own sobriety like going to a convention or a recovery retreat. There are workshops that happen at the district or Area level, which can be a great place to learn more about things like being a good sponsor, or information on what makes a home group function better.

Within A.A. as a whole, the GSR is likely to bring back information about international conventions or provide updates on the latest literature, such as the 5th edition of the Big Book. Equally important, the GSR serves as the only means for your home group to vote on matters that may affect Alcoholics Anonymous. While the GSR may not vote on issues like changing the Preamble, they play a crucial role in ensuring your group's voice is heard.

Vitaly, the GSR is the link to the Area Assembly, where the Area Delegate, who *does* get that vote at the conference, can hear your voices. If your group is not represented at the assembly, the delegate will probably never hear your thoughts and ideas on how and when to make improvements to this life-saving message of recovery. And you may never hear of a change to the literature your group uses in its primary purpose, to carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic.

Greetings from an inactive district

Kristin B., Chair, Area 29 Newsletter Committee

Available for adoption: Rural district of Alcoholics Anonymous in the gorgeous mountains of Western Maryland. We are a community of about 35 meetings, many literature-based, and have a fairly active Intergroup that provides a hotline, meeting lists, gratitude breakfast, treatment center meetings, newsletter, and occasional workshop. We are people who ordinarily would not mix; recovering alcoholics who are mostly open-minded and willing, though a little set in our ways, it must be said.

We're doing OK on our own – many of us are staying sober and enjoying life and carrying the message to suffering alcoholics in our communities.

A.A. works, even in a vacuum.

One problem: We don't know what we're missing.

I'll speak for myself first. Until a year and a half ago, with 30 years sober and no experience in Area service, I didn't know what I was missing.

I've been itinerant my whole life, moving every two or three years, first with a father in the Air Force, then as a newspaper journalist. I got sober in Shreveport, La., in 1992 by the grace of God, the 12 Steps, strong sponsorship, and 12th-Step work.

Every place I have lived, I've had a sponsor and sponsored other women, attended meetings, participated in local A.A. activities, studied the Traditions and other A.A. literature, and held group-level service positions. Here and there, I heard others talk about General Service.

I tuned right out.

I was busy, you see! Working long hours, learning not to drink, getting to know myself, making mistakes, making amends, living life. But mostly, if you said 'General Service,' I heard "committees...meetings...conflict...disagreements."

No thanks. I was getting along just fine.

I'm grateful that recent circumstances, some of them unpleasant, led me to take one of Don B.'s online CONTRA studies. And then another. It confirmed a lot of what I had



intuited about A.A. in this wonderful Western Maryland community, where I have lived now for 15 years (the longest I've ever lived anywhere!)

We are doing A.A. in a vacuum.

It's not our fault – not all our fault, anyway. Geography plays a big part. We are more than 150 miles west of Maryland's city centers, where most Area meetings take place. In terms of terrain, Allegany and Garrett counties could be a different planet. (If you like to hike, or fly fish, or do anything outdoors, come on over! We'd love to see you.)

Staying connected to the Fellowship via GSRs and an active district simply hasn't been a part of A.A. culture here. And that's OK.

But it's not great. It's not "fourth dimension." Without GSRs, we aren't experiencing and contributing to the living, breathing, and evolving organization that is A.A. We are missing out.

Area service isn't for everyone; it's true. But a few trusted servants in a district could go a long way toward building a sense of community with this Fellowship we all love so much.

Maybe getting "adopted" would help us to, first, feel the void of not being involved, then find the willingness and open-mindedness to give General Service a try. That's what it took for me. So grateful that the God of my understanding helped me find my way to be here among you.

OUR COMMON WELFARE

‘Strong Deeds, Gentle Words’ – An introduction to Area 29

Editor’s note: At the General Service Conference this month, first-year delegates give a two-minute presentation to describe their areas. Area 29’s Delegate Terry P. came in just under the wire during a practice run at the March 16 Assembly.

“Our common welfare comes first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.” (Tradition 1)

Our Common Welfare is the newsletter for Area 29 Maryland General Service, published quarterly to foster unity and cultivate communication among A.A. members, groups, districts, and Intergroups within the MGS Area of Alcoholics Anonymous. *OCW* aims to encourage service and carry the A.A. message by publishing A.A.-related material, including personal stories of experience, strength and hope, and members’ encounters with service at every level.

Nothing published in *OCW* should be thought of as a statement of Area 29 or A.A. policy, and publication does not constitute endorsement by the newsletter, Area 29, Intergroup, Districts, local groups, or A.A. as a whole.

Submission Guidelines

Submissions are welcome, including anonymity-protected photos, graphics, drawings, and articles. Written submissions can be up to 500 words – shorter is fine, too. All submissions will be reviewed by the Newsletter Committee chair and may be edited for length and clarity.

Send submissions and calendar items to margenser@marylandaa.org.

Looking for a service position?

Join the Newsletter Committee and help us grow and develop the revived Area 29 publication. Contact Kristin B. at margenser@marylandaa.org

Feedback is welcome...and encouraged. Let us know what you think. What else would you like to see in the newsletter?

Terry P., Area 29 Delegate

Area 29 encompasses all of Maryland, excluding the two counties north of Washington D.C. This diverse region, from the western mountains to the eastern ocean, comprises major metropolitan areas, suburbs, farmlands, and rural communities. With 11 intergroups, including a dedicated Spanish-language intergroup, 34 districts, and 886 active groups, including online meetings, Maryland is a vibrant and engaged community.

Maryland General Service holds four committee meetings and five assemblies each year, and hosts a strategic planning session, state convention, and mini-conference to foster a well-informed assembly. The pre-conference process involves meetings with four regional committees, known as Conference Agenda Review Committees. CARCs, as we call them, not only prepare the delegate and alternate delegate for the General Service Conference, but also stimulate widespread discussion and involvement in the General Service process. Through our year-round CARC process, we continue to review the actions of each conference and develop new proposed agenda items to enhance the effectiveness of our General Service.

Area 29 comprises 19 committees, including the technology committee, which recently unveiled a slick new polished website (marylandaa.org), and the newsletter committee, who is busy reviving our newsletter, breathing new life into these crucial communication channels. Reflecting the state motto, “Strong Deeds, Gentle Words,” the trusted servants of Area 29 embody this ethos in their dedicated service to our members. Maryland, the birthplace of Samuel Shoemaker and the final resting place of Fitz Mayo and Jim Burwell, boasts a storied history of extending a helping hand to the newcomer in pursuit of recovery. Located right in the middle of the Atlantic coast region, stop in for a meeting if you’re passing through.

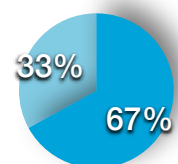
Area 29 Maryland General Service	
11	Intergroups
34	Districts
886	Active groups
19	Committees
4	Committee meetings/year
5	Assemblies/year

The votes are in...

Area 29 Maryland General Service has chosen *Our Common Welfare* as the name for the revived quarterly newsletter.

One hundred and twenty ballots were cast in the online poll. Thank you for participating!

Watch for a history and tribute to the *Margenser* in an upcoming issue.



● Our Common Welfare
● Margenser

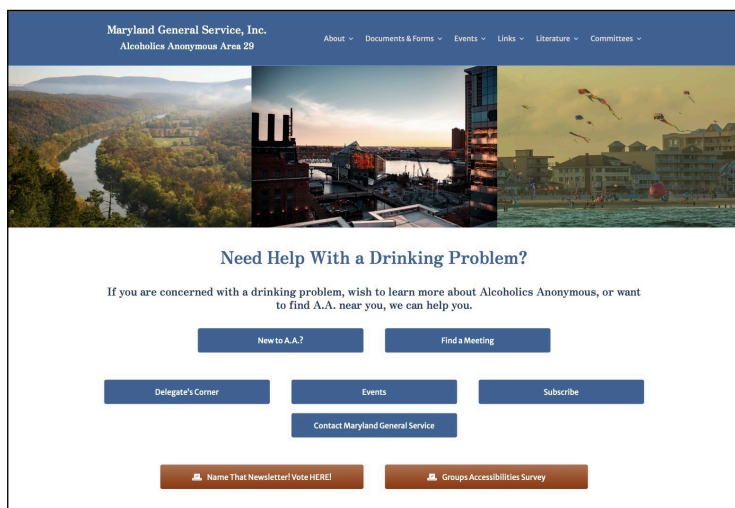
Communication tools help to inform group conscience

Frank M., Chair

As I write this, I am now into this service position for about three months and I can say it has been exciting. Thanks to the work done by previous panels, many projects have come to fruition already: this newsletter being one, as well as our new Hispanic District 29 and our wonderful new website (marylandaa.org). We have embraced hybrid meetings so more folks can participate and we as an Area can have a more representative informed group conscience. There is much more to be done to enable our groups to better fulfill our primary purpose.

If anything has been encouraging, it is to see Area 29 rise from the challenges we faced during the COVID-19 years to a real Springtime of Service. Panel 70 led us through a strictly online world of AA and we kept moving forward. Panel 72 brought us to the hybrid world, got committees up and running as we embraced this “new normal”. As we always do in AA, we learn from and grow on the experience of those who have served before us. As chair of this Panel 74, I am grateful for our previous chairs.

Finally, let me say a word of thanks to all those serving in our committees. They are keeping me busy, which is great! I'm here to support all their efforts. Thanks to our Delegate, Alternate Delegate, Secretary and Treasurer that make up our Panel officers. We have a great team. Most of all – thanks to all of you for your commitment to our beloved fellowship. Consider serving your group as a GSR, your district as DCM, your Area as a committee member. We need you. We need your voice. Service beyond the Home Group is fun, rewarding and necessary. Feel free to reach out to me any time at chair@marylandaa.org.



Panel 74 Elections

Oct. 21, 2023

–72 voting members present on site

–20 voting members online

Delegate – Terry P.

Alternate Delegate – Lori M.

Chair – Frank M.

Secretary – Joe R.

Treasurer – Brigitte F.

Find the Panel 74 Delegate's monthly report online here:

marylandaa.org/area-delegate

Meet your Panel 74 officers

A new two-year rotation began Jan. 1 for Area 29 Panel 74 officers, who were elected during the Oct. 21, 2023, Maryland General Service Assembly.

Held in a hybrid format, the meeting had 92 participants.

Don B., Panel 68 Past Delegate, led the election process for offices including Delegate, Alternate Delegate, Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer. Past Panel members summarized responsibilities of the roles, voting members reviewed resumes, then submitted ballots.

Officers are listed above. All terms are for two years.

For descriptions of officer duties and responsibilities, see the A.A. Service Manual and MGS Area 29 Assembly Handbook.

CHILI COOKOFF

SPICES UP AREA SERVICE



'Mexican Chili'

HALETHORPE, Md. – Trusted servants from across the state arrived wearing oven mitts and bearing crockpots, dreaming of first-place glory.

Area 29’s Chili Cook-off on Nov. 5 drew around 70 people to the fellowship hall of St. Stephens Church for a feast and training event for those new and experienced in A.A. service.

“Bring the Heat and a Heart for Service” was the theme of the event, co-sponsored by District 18 and the Area 29 Accessibilities Committee.

Fourteen A.A. groups from 11 districts in Maryland entered a pot of chili, with many offering extras: Sour cream, shredded cheese, tomatoes, radishes, scallions, jalapenos – all the fixins’. Co-sponsors provided Fritos, cornbread, and drinks.

District 7’s Dawn Patrol Group decided to be nice about it and brought “Sweet and Kind” Chili.

District 18’s West Baltimore Group was somewhat less considerate with “4-bean 5-alarm” chili. Thankfully, nobody had to call the fire department.

It was an unseasonably warm day for chili – upwards of 70 degrees – but that didn’t stop anyone from digging in. With tiny spoons, participants tasted some or all of the entries before casting ballots and going back for more in regular-sized bowls.

The fellowship hall smelled amazing.

While volunteers counted ballots, participants heard four presentations about A.A.’s service structure. In the end, just three chili-makers received prizes.

For her White Bean Chicken Chili, Thomasine E. took home the top prize – a two-foot-tall trophy and a chef’s apron reading “Champion” and “1st Place” alongside a flaming red chili. Her crock pot was empty.

“This has been a great event,” said Terry P., Panel 74 Delegate. “The chili’s been outstanding.”

See a list of all 14 entries on page 7.

And the winners are....



1st place –
White bean
chicken chili
—Thomasine E.,
District 10



2nd place –
Mexican
Chili
—Gil M., Baltimore
Hispanic Intergroup



3rd place –
Alabama
Soul Chili
—Nicole R., New
Beginning Women’s
Group, District 18.

CHILI COOKOFF ENTRIES

1. **Alabama Soul Chili**, Nicole R., New Beginnings Women's Group, District 18.
2. **Low Carb & Spicy Chili**, Jessica W., District 10.
3. **Texas Style Chili**, Tyler M., District 15, Area Literature CoChair.
4. **Mexican Chili**, Gil M., Baltimore Hispanic Intergroup
5. **Rule 64 Chili**, Mary Ellen K., District 7.
6. **Beverly Chili**, Beverly, District 22.
7. **4-Bean 5-Alarm Chili**, Bob O., West Baltimore Group, District 18.
8. **White Bean Chicken Chili**, Thomasine E., District 10.
9. **Sweet and Kind Chili**, Edna, Dawn Patrol Group, District 7.
10. **Mom's Chili – Veggie Lentil**, Anne C., District 7.
11. **Wild Duck Chili**, Henry, Stevensville, Thursday Group, District 22.
12. **Beef Birria Chili**, Mike L., District 18.
13. **Southwest Smoker**, Ed A., West Baltimore Group, District 18.
14. **Beyond Meat Chili**, Steve S., District 19.

GSR...DCM...CARC...

What's it all mean?

Nov. 5th Chili Cook-off presentations help demystify acronyms

While participants feasted on chili, volunteers counted taste-test ballots, and four trusted servants gave presentations about A.A.'s service structure.



—Gil M., of the Baltimore Hispanic Intergroup, talked about what goes into being a GSR, or General Service Representative.

"A GSR is a reporter, a communicator."

"In essence, your role as a DCM is about being that reliable conduit, a responsive listener, and a thoughtful leader..."

—Terry P., Panel 74 Delegate, discussed what it means to be a District Committee Member, or DCM.

—Brigitte F., Area Treasurer, discussed how the Area fits into the overall service structure of A.A. — the upside-down triangle — as well as Roberts Rules of Order.

"I encourage you all to just keep making yourselves available to service opportunities, with no expectations. God, aka that informed group conscience of the room, will show you where you are needed."

"The CARCs evaluate, discuss, review, and propose agenda items for the annual General Service Conference and provide opportunities for any interested A.A. member to have their voice heard in the process."

—Don B., Panel 68 Past Delegate, talked about all the acronyms — GSR, DCM, GSC, and the CARCs.

N_{orth}

E_{ast}

R_{egional}

A_{lcoholics}

A_{nonymous}

S_{ervice}

A_{ssembly}

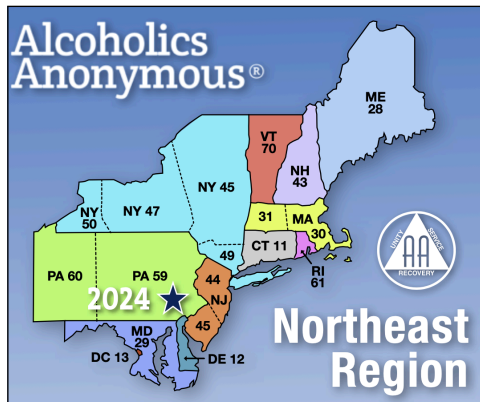
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‘Connecting with Love, Unity, and Service’



1,312 attendees

20 roundtables

6 panels

1 – Participation of Online Groups

2 – Is our literature still relevant today?

3 – Money and Spirituality

4 – The Words of Our Founders

5 – Are we communicating effectively within A.A.?

6 – Safety in A.A., Belonging in A.A.

I just heard dozens of people in a row, sharing their perspective and their experience, and I really got to be fully immersed in practicing listening without forming judgment or a response or reacting. And I felt that that was the spiritual growth that apparently I needed. Because I’ve been able to apply that immediately in my life.”

–Marie B., Registrar,
Area 29

I was heartened by the number of young people at NERAASA. It’s obvious that A.A. is in good hands for our children and great-grandchildren.”

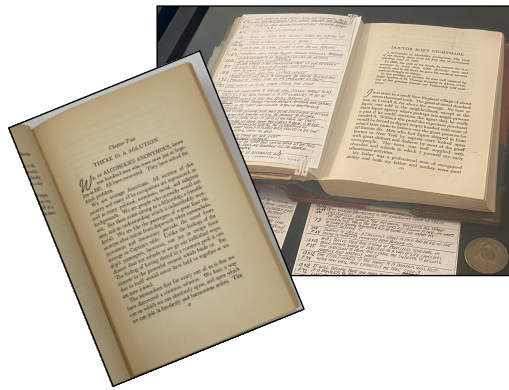
–Jerry C., DCM, District 7

These panels are where I have probably felt God the most, for me. This year I found that the conversation of changing the Founders’ writings kind of bled into all of the panels, which was a bit disheartening for me. I heard a lot of the same ideas, a lot of the same upsets and thoughts and opinions. But I got to sit with my friends. We got to have some really productive conversations around these panel topics.

The one thing I got out of it the most is that AA is still as simple as reaching out your hand to the next suffering alcoholic, and regardless of the Founders’ writings, we have the language of the heart, which is one alcoholic talking to another.”

–Bethany Y., Chair, Grapevine Committee, Area 29

The Words of our Founders



Panel 4 presenters, including Area 29 Accessibilities Chair Brandi T., discuss whether to revise or retain

Brandi T., Area 29 Accessibilities Chair

(Excerpts from a 10-minute presentation entitled, "Retaining the original writing to preserve history: Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.")

Our co-founder Bill W. wrote our book *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* in 1953....(using) idioms and set expressions from that time that often today may sound outdated. Fifty years from now our present manner of speech and manner of living will certainly sound old-fashioned too, even ridiculous, to those future generations. This text is a part of our history, our collective memory....

During the 71st General Service Conference, there were two Advisory Actions passed that revised the language in Steps 6 and 12 in the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*. In response, there was an outpouring from the Fellowship. Members submitted 40 agenda proposals to the General Service Office requesting the advisory actions be reversed or rescinded, and preserve, unaltered, the text in the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*....

(Some of the reasons involved) past Advisory Actions, including one in 1995 recommending that there be no changes to the first 164 pages of our Big Book, the Doctor's Opinion, Dr. Bob's Nightmare, and the Appendices. In addition, the 2002 Advisory Action unanimously recommended that the text in the book *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, written by Bill W., remain as is, recognizing the Fellowship's strong sentiment that Bill's writing be retained as originally published....

(Also), there had been limited discussion and lack of fully informed group conscience. Some proposed agenda items raised significant concern

that a thorough group conscience was not obtained about the agenda items at the 71st GSC due to the pandemic. There was a disconnect in communication between the members, GSRs, the Districts, Area Reps to the groups and not enough ears heard the motion to change the language. Further, there is a need for a broader group conscience, especially given the gravity of these changes...

(Also) several felt that these changes represent explicit endorsements of outside issues and violate Tradition 10. There is a concern that these changes will fuel division within AA, which is a distraction from our primary purpose...

When I started this project I had a narrow view of this topic. My advisor Linda J. told me that this would be an opportunity for spiritual growth. As I communicated with my network and dove into the research, my view broadened as I learned the history of our literature and how the conference agenda process works. Just as it happens at my group consciences at my home group, I may go into the meeting thinking one way and that I know what's best for the group. Many times after hearing what other members say I realize what I think may not be what's best for the group. This is the importance of the group conscience, right?

In this case, because the book has helped so many alcoholics find recovery, there is a strong sentiment within the fellowship against any change to it. As such, there are valid justifications for preserving their original words. The collective spiritual experience of the A.A. pioneers captured in these pages continue to help alcoholics and friends of A.A. understand the principles of our program.

N_{orth}

E_{ast}

R_{egional}

A_{lcoholics}

A_{nonymous}

S_{ervice}

A_{ssembly}

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Should it actually be harder to change the Founders' writings?

One group of Frederick alcoholics was surprised to discover what they thought

Brigitte F., Treasurer, Panel 74

I've been thinking a lot about a workshop that I helped facilitate recently and how what I heard led me to a new perspective concerning the current "hot topic" being discussed in AA meetings, workshops, and at our CARCs – namely, possible changes to our Founders' Writings.

The workshop was co-sponsored by my home group, Early Bird in Frederick, and District 40. Roughly 20 of us gathered in person to discuss the seven questions sent out by the Board of Trustees in New York requesting input on this matter.

While the Founders' Writings as a whole encompass the Big Book, the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* aka The 12 and 12, and essays written by program founders Bill W and Dr. Bob, the group keyed in on the Big Book right away as its primary discussion topic.

Thanks to our current Alternate Delegate Lori M., I was able to provide the group with some information about the process for changing our Big Book and 12 and 12 that has already been established by past General Service Conference Advisory Actions. That process is as follows:

- A proposal to make a change to the AA literature can be submitted by an A.A. member, group, District, Area, etc.
- The proposal then gets forwarded to a committee of the General Service Board (Trustees' Committee)
- After review, the Trustees may refer the proposed change to a committee of the General Service Conference (Conference Committee) as an agenda item
- The Conference Committee would then review it and make recommendations to the full General Service Conference

• The General Service Conference must approve the change by a 2/3 majority. Note: This is exactly how the process worked to make the most recent changes to the 12 and 12.

A couple of old timers in the room asked why we are going through this exercise about possibly developing a new process when we already have a process, as just detailed above.

"Is it a little cumbersome? Yes. And it should be!" one of them said ... these words really lit a fire under the attendees, most of whom had initially been talking about making changes when necessary to explain some of the old fashioned language ("boiled as an owl" was brought up several times).

However, the idea that for some reason the Trustees might be looking for a way to make it easier to make changes in our beloved Big Book really jolted everyone. (Leave it to an old timer to stir things up!)

Another "drop the mic" moment occurred when one of our newcomers, who has less than 30 days, spoke up. She is a young black woman who doesn't care that the Big Book was obviously written by and for white men back in 1939... she is finding a solution to her alcoholism in the Big Book the way it is currently written.

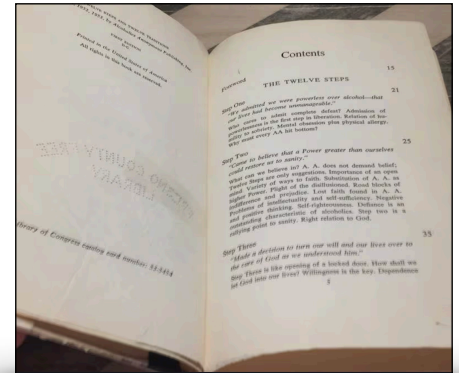
"I would hate to come in here and have you all not be using the Big Book text anymore and using something different! That honestly scares me," she said.

By the end of the workshop, the group was pretty much unanimous. They want changes to go through the same process required to change the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions: a 2/3 majority vote of all the groups in THE WORLD. In other words, let's make it more difficult than ever to make any changes to our founders' writings.

Everyone agreed that plenty of pamphlets have been created to help attract particular populations into A.A. If people struggle understanding the Big Book, they will soon have the option of using the Plain Language Big Book.

Since the workshop, I've been thinking that perhaps this drive to make language more inclusive is more about safety than anything else. If people desire changes that

See **Founders** opage 11



SPOTLIGHT

PUBLIC INFORMATION & CPC COMMITTEES

Area 29's Public information (PI) and Cooperation with the Professional Community (CPC) committees have started off 2024 with a flurry of activity, working together to participate in a number of health fairs and other events.

On Feb. 10, the committees, along with Al-Anon and Area 29's Spanish Language A.A. members, set up a 10 x 10 booth with a 6-foot table at the B More Healthy Expo in Baltimore. More than 150 exhibitors set up at the Baltimore Convention Center for the event, including county and state agencies, medical and behavioral health organizations, scout troops, banks, Gamblers Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous.

PI Committee Chair Kathi K. And CPC Committee Chair Jessica W. reported on their recent activities at the Feb. 17th Area Committee meeting. The A.A. booth had plenty of volunteers.

"N.A. had one pamphlet rack and two volunteers and said they had hoped to have more volunteers like A.A. and Al-Anon," Kathi K. said.

"...Our event was filled with A.A. members, and it was not only accepted and welcomed, but it made the event so much more interesting and fun," Kathi K. said. "Not only did we have a wonderful time fellowshiping with each other and getting to know each other, we had plenty of time to walk the event and know the booth was sufficiently staffed at all times. More importantly, I feel that we gave the general public the opportunity to witness the high energy and camaraderie that comes with recovery from this hopeless state of mind and body."

During the 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. event, there was "rock climbing, and lots of dancing – square dancing, cultural dancing, and aerobic and electric slide-type dancing," Kathi K. said. At future PI and CPC events, "we are asking for volunteers to fill the booth in increments throughout the day," she said. "We hope this will help inspire new members to get involved in this type of service."

PI and CPC committees have the similar mission of letting the public and professional community know about A.A. They meet jointly at 3 p.m. on the third Sunday of the month, via Zoom. For more information, go to marylandaa.org/public-information.



Area 29's display at the Drug and Violence Awareness Expo at the Carroll County Agricultural Center on March 12.

JOINT MONTHLY MEETINGS

**PI & CPC
Area 29 Maryland**
Teaming up to
Provide
Comprehensive
Service to A.A.

Cooperation with the Professional Community
MEMBERS OF C.P.C. COMMITTEES INFORM PROFESSIONALS AND FUTURE PROFESSIONALS ABOUT A.A.
JESSICA W., CPC CHAIR
CPC@MARYLANDAA.ORG

- Establishing better communication with professionals working with alcoholics.
- Finding simple, effective ways of cooperating without affiliating.
- Explaining clearly what A.A. does and doesn't do.

Public Information
MEMBERS OF PUBLIC INFORMATION COMMITTEES CONVEY A.A. INFORMATION TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC
KATHI K., PI CHAIR
PI@MARYLANDAA.ORG

- Giving presentations about A.A. to schools and organizations
- Providing information about A.A. through digital and print materials.
- Ensuring local media have accurate information about A.A. through PSA's, anonymity protected interviews, and press kits.

Join us at 3 p.m. on the 3rd Sunday of the month starting Jan 21, 2024
ID: 854
5914 3395
Pw: 199887
District Chairs and Interested AA members are invited!

CONTACT: A29CPCPI@GMAIL.COM

Founders continued from page 10

make them feel included in A.A., isn't that more a function of home groups rather than literature? Shouldn't we be doing all we can to welcome new people, regardless of whether they are different from us? Tradition Three states "The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking." That said, are we able to set aside our fears of those who look and act differently?

Feeling unsafe includes feeling unwanted and on the outside looking in. Feeling welcome means being introduced

around, given phone numbers and seeing hands raised when asked who is available to sponsor. It's about home group members getting out of our little bubbles with our friends and reaching out to the people sitting on the outskirts of the meeting, dying of alcoholism and desperate for a solution, as we once were.

Let's work on keeping our rooms safe, secure and welcoming for everyone who seeks a solution to their drinking.

A.A. RESOURCES

**box
459**

General Service
Office Newsletter
aa.org/box-459

**A.A. Grapevine
PODCAST**



www.aagrapevine.org/podcast

**Meeting Guide
App**



aa.org/meeting-guide-app

A.A. on YouTube



[YouTube.com/
@alcoholicsanony
mousworldse1373](https://www.youtube.com/@alcoholicsanonymouworldse1373)

**A.A. World
Services
Literature**



onlineliterature.aa.org

Grapevine publisher asks for support

More than 5,000 people have subscribed to the new *Grapevine* app since it came out in September, a “big shot in the arm” for the magazine, Publisher Chris C. told an audience at NERAASA in February.

But the magazine’s leadership is encouraging A.A. members and trusted servants to tell their groups about the app and support *Grapevine* and *LaViña*, as the magazines face increasing costs. Subscription prices will increase on April 15 for the first time in more than 12 years.

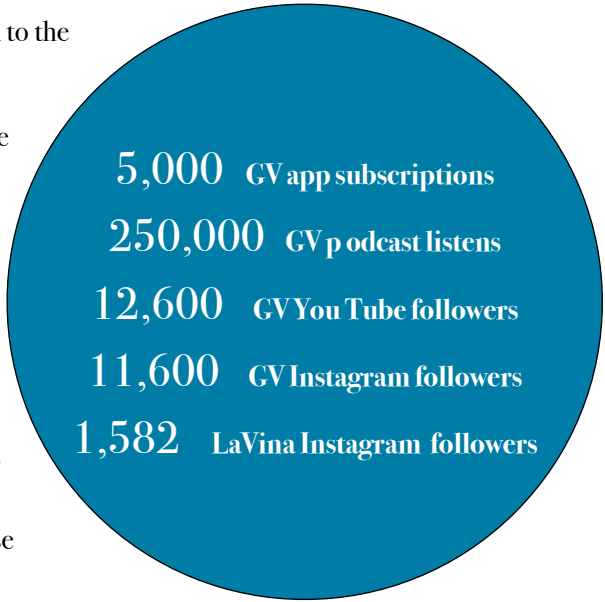
“We’re struggling financially right now,” he said. “If we could get 1 percent of the Fellowship to subscribe to *Grapevine*, all these issues go away.”

Two *GV/LV* items are on the agenda for the 2024 General Service Conference, Chris C. said: 1) Discuss the viability of continuing to publish *La Viña*, considering increased costs and decreased subscriptions, 2) whether to monetize the *GV* podcast and other digital services that are currently free.

“In the office and with the board members we’re doing a lot of work to try to attract new people to *Grapevine* through the app, and that’s really what it’s about,” Chris C. said.

“We want to help alcoholics, and we want to provide modern stories to help them recover from alcoholism. The reality of it is, we have to earn money in order to keep doing that. I’m convinced now more than ever that the best, the most effective way to communicate something in AA is enthusiastic word of mouth.”

The *GV* and *La Viña* apps are free to download, with an in-app subscription available. Unlike the General Service Office, *Grapevine* and *La Viña* do not accept direct contributions from A.A. membership. They are funded through subscriptions.



Grapevine and *La Viña* statistics provided by Publisher Chris C. during a talk at NERAASA on Feb. 23.

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THE NEW GRAPEVINE & LA VIÑA APPS!

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- Keep track of your sobriety and spiritual practices
- Listen to our podcast
- Share AA stories and area events with friends
- Find meetings and connect to aa.org

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For more information visit: www.aagrapevine.org/apps



Download the Apps for iPhone
Download the Apps for free from the Apple App Store for iPhone.

On your phone or tablet, go to the Apple App Store and search for “Grapevine” or “La Viña.” Tap download...

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Download the Apps for Android
Download the apps for free from the Google Play Store for Android.

On your phone or tablet, go to Google Play, and search for “Grapevine” or “La Viña.” Tap download...

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Preparing our delegate and alternate for Conference

Conference Agenda Review Committee (CARC) – an acronym explained

Lori McP., Alternate Delegate, Area 29

Editor's note: The April 6th mini-conference is the culmination of this year's CARC activity. The following serves as a primer for those unfamiliar with the process, who might like to participate next year.

We are in the middle of Conference Agenda Review Committee (CARC) season in Area 29, and every member of Alcoholics Anonymous is invited—and encouraged—to participate in the process. But...what is this all about?

At this point of the year, the CARC process in Area 29 has one purpose: to help prepare the Area Delegate and Alternate Delegate for the General Service Conference meeting, held the week of April 14-20 in Brooklyn, New York.

What is the General Service Conference?

The General Service Conference is a body of approximately 135 members, including:

- 93 area delegates;
- 21 Trustees (board members) of the General Service Board;
- 6 non-Trustee directors (board members) from A.A. World Services and A.A. Grapevine; and
- 15 A.A. staff members at the General Service Office (A.A. World Services, Grapevine, and La Viña).

The General Service Conference acts as the guardian of Alcoholics Anonymous, and of the Steps and Traditions. It considers matters of policy for Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole and operates year-round. The General Service Conference meets once a year for a week-long meeting, serving as the collective group conscience of Alcoholics Anonymous in the United States and Canada, to guide the actions of the General Service Board.

The General Service Board is required to follow any *Advisory Action* of the General Service Conference. Advisory Actions require a 2/3 vote of the General Service Conference for adoption.

What in the world is a CARC?

Area 29 is broken down into four geographic regions, each of which has a Conference Agenda Review Committee (CARC):

CARC I: Eastern Shore

CARC II: Southern Maryland

CARC III: Baltimore & Northeast Maryland

CARC IV: Central & Western Maryland

To find your CARC, go to https://www.marylandaa.org/carc_meetings_schedule and scroll down. You can find your CARC by the District your home group is located in. Each CARC has a leader that you can connect with; just email me at the address below and I'll link you up!

Any A.A. member can participate in any CARC meeting; members are encouraged – but not required – to attend the CARC meetings in the geographic region where their home group is located.

What happens at a CARC meeting?

A CARC can meet for a number of reasons: planning, hosting the Delegate and Alternate Delegate as the CARC members provide feedback on certain agenda items coming before the General Service Conference, or suggesting agenda items for upcoming meetings of the General Service Conference.

Where are we in the process?

We are almost finished with the series of CARC meetings where feedback on agenda items is provided to the Delegate and Alternate Delegate. CARC I met on March 2 in Chestertown, and CARCs II and III each met on March 23 (in Owensville and Timonium, respectively). CARC IV is planning to meet on March 30 in Frederick.

Then—on April 6 in Severna Park—Area 29 will host its Mini-Conference!

A Mini-Conference?

Yes! On April 6 we'll have a day of engaging discussions on agenda items that will be before the General Service Conference, including items covered in the different CARC meetings. The Delegate and Alternate Delegate will both be in attendance. In addition, we'll have a full presentation on the status of the 5th Edition Big Book, Plain and Simple Language translation of the Big Book, and a discussion on how the General Service Board should treat any future proposed changes to the Founders' Writings.

All are welcome—and that means you, too!! For additional information, please email me at altdelegate@maryland.aa.org.

Conversation with a District Committee Member (DCM)

Brian B., District 1

Q: Do you have a home group? Why is having a home group important to your sobriety?

A: The Cove Point Group in Lusby has been my home group for 17 years. It's important to me because it keeps me in touch with people who are new to sobriety. As my last drink fades into memory, I need something to remind me of the pain and insanity that brought me here. A home group also keeps me in contact with a core group of fellow alcoholics who give each other support.

Q: Which A.A. slogan resonated with you most when you first got sober, if any? Which one resonates most now?

A: I am not big on slogans, but when I was new, I latched on to "if you want what we have." I looked for people who had what I wanted and learned from them.

I don't have a favorite now.

Q: How does doing A.A. service enhance your sobriety, particularly in your current position, but also in previous positions?

A: Service gets me out and in contact with others when I would rather isolate.

It also teaches me lessons that I otherwise have a hard time learning. Recently I was having a hard time solving a problem in my district. I spent weeks trying to solve it on my own. I finally reached out and asked for help, and the problem was solved in an hour.

Q: Do you have a service sponsor? If so, how do you use your service sponsor?

A: I don't have a single service sponsor, but I do have a group of experienced people I reach out to for guidance. I use them as a reality check to ensure that I'm not forgetting important points and I'm considering opinions that may conflict with my own.

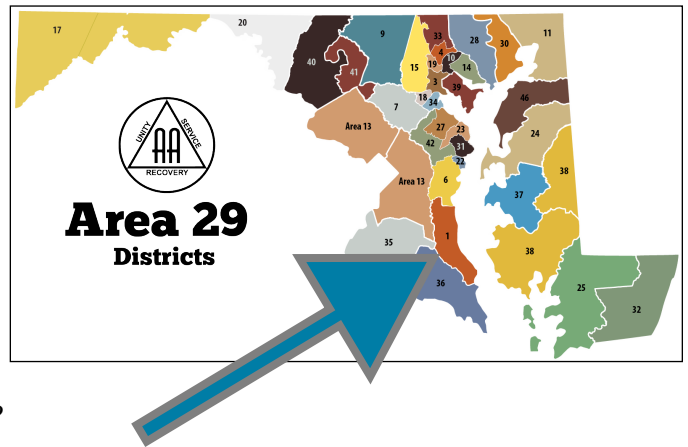
Q: Do you have a favorite "tip" for newcomers that you like to pass along? What helped you most early in recovery?

A: For newcomers, look for people who have what you want and do what they do. If you want serenity, you won't learn it from people who don't have it.

I had a big problem with God when I got here, and page 47 in the Big Book got me past that hurdle: "Do I now believe, or am I even willing to believe, that there is a Power greater than myself? As soon as a man can say that he does believe, or is willing to believe, we emphatically assure him that he is on his way."

DEFINITION: District Committee Member (DCM): "While the GSR is the voice of a group, the DCM is the voice of a district. A district needs a leader. The GSRs will look to the DCM for guidance on being GSRs and serving their groups. They will look to the DCM to lead on forming an agenda for district activities. They'll want to be inspired and encouraged, but not told what to do."

—From *The A.A. Service Manual*, p. 13



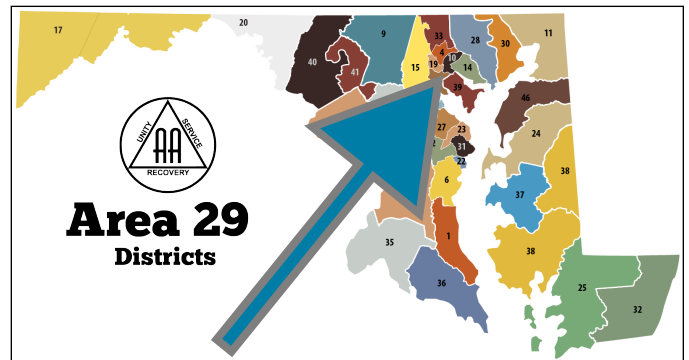
Conversation with a General Service Representative (GSR)

Aim C., Strangely Insane Group, Parkville (District 10)

Q: How long have you been serving as a GSR and what inspired you to step up and serve?

A: With my current home group, it has only been a few months. However, this isn't my first time as a GSR. I come with plenty of experience from other groups and Areas. My very first time as a GSR, I was 1½ years sober for Eye Opener Group in Wilmington, Del. As for what inspired me, I wanted to directly serve the society that saved my life, Alcoholics Anonymous. GSRs are the first link the long upside-down pyramid. There is so much depth to our service structure.

This time, I believe it is the legacy of unity that inspired me to serve. Unity and love. Every group deserves a GSR that loves doing what GSRs do. Helping others learn about the inner workings of our Area, their District, and their Group. Seeing the group conscience in action, learning how not to bleed, and how to be a better trusted servant each and every time. I want to be an elder statesman one day. That calm, reassuring voice, people look forward to. I'm still working on that.



Q: What have been some of the rewards of being a GSR?

A: Getting a group excited about General Service gives me a burst of enthusiasm. I love putting on District workshops. Since I'm not new to the role, I like to take the hand of other GSRs and DCMs and help them become better servants. Taking people through the Traditions, Concepts, and Service Manual is equally as exciting as taking them through the Steps in the Big Book and the 12 & 12. To watch someone get it, to learn what to do, then do it, that's as good as it gets.

Q: What have been some of the challenges of being a GSR?

A: Getting groups involved. Forming districts. Money. Whether it is about how much the district has – or not yet having a DCM and trying to form a bank account with financially trustworthy alcoholics....Keeping Concept V in action – the minority opinion – sometimes you have to stop the majority from celebrating and help them remember we still have to hear the minority opinion. An entire conscience can change with hearing just one lone member who expressed the minority opinion. Confidence. Very early on, I struggled with confidence. I no longer struggle like I once did, because I know the literature very well and can find the answers quickly. When I know where I can find the answer, the courage to speak at the mic comes easier.

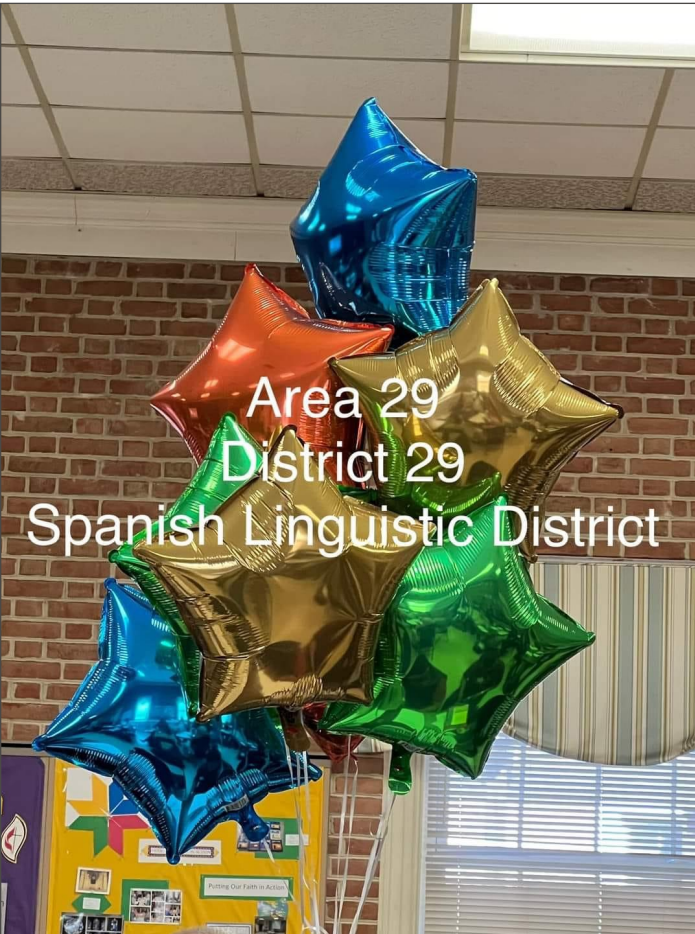
Q: What are tips you might give to someone considering getting involved?

A: 1) Don't rush. Enjoy the position. GSR is a position of love and trust. 2) Remember, if you have to go against your group's wishes, for the good of AA – based on new information at an Assembly – then remember to tell them when you come back. 3) Don't be scared. You sometimes have to make on the spot decisions; that is what Concept III is all about. You have the Right of Decision as a GSR and sometimes you have to exercise it. 4) Probably the best two phrases in Robert's Rules of Order: "Call the Question" and "Point of Order". Learn about Robert's Rules, or otherwise you'll be so overwhelmed like I was when I first began.

DEFINITION: "The GSR is the link between the group and 'A.A. as a whole.' This link becomes a channel through which news, information, opinions and ideas can flow back and forth. Importantly, this also gives the group a voice in the affairs of the Fellowship. The GSR is that voice."

—From *The A.A. Service Manual*, p. 7

What did we vote on at the Area 29 Assembly in March?



Three action items:

1. That a new District be created in Area 29 consisting of the Spanish-Language Groups in the geographic region covered by Area 29. **Approved 75-0**
2. That the \$500.00 designated for the three Area 29 Officers and seven Area 29 Committees in the 2024 Budget to attend the 2024 Maryland State Convention be removed from their budgets. (No convention is planned for this year.) **Approved 53-2**
3. That the 2024 Budget for the Public Information Committee to be increased from a total of \$1,265.00 to \$2,375.00 to be consistent with other Area 29 Committee Budgets. **Approved 56-0**



Who votes at Area Assembly? GSRs, DCMs, Area officers, and Area Committee Chairs (or alternates).

Want to have a voice and a vote? Become your group's GSR! Learn more on the Maryland General Service website.

What's happening next in Area 29?

- ° May 18 – Area Assembly, Delegate Report Back from General Service Conference, Severna Park United Methodist Church, 731 Benfield Road, Severna Park, Md.
- ° July 13 – Area Committee, St. John's Lutheran Church 8808 Harford Rd., Baltimore, Md.
- ° Aug. 17 – Area Assembly, Severna Park Methodist Church, 731 Benfield Road, Severna Park, Md.
- ° Sept. 14 – Area Committee or Assembly (held virtually if there is urgent Area business).
- ° Oct. 19 – Area Assembly, Area Inventory, Severna Park United Methodist Church, 731 Benfield Road, Severna Park, Md.
- ° Nov. 16 – Area Committee, Host District: District 18.
- ° Dec. 14 – Area Assembly, Host District: District 7.

See Area 29's online Events page for more information at marylandaa.org/events



Members of A.A. can send contributions to: Maryland General Service
PO Box 1834
Frederick, MD 21702